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REMARKS RELATIVE
TO THE
PAY OF MEDICAL STAFF
OF THE
ARMY OF THE U. S.

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REMARKS

RELATIVE TO

THE PAY OF THE MEDICAL STAFF

OF THE

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES.

WASHINGTON, *March 24, 1834.*

SOLICITOUS for the general welfare of the Medical Staff of the army, some of its friends respectfully submit the subjoined condensed statement of the actual condition of that department, together with several recommendations for improving its condition.

1. The pay of every officer of the army below the rank of a field officer, except that of the Surgeons and Assistant Surgeons, has been increased since 1815, as will be seen by the following table:

	Pay and subsistence, 1815.	Pay and subsistence at present.	Increase.
Surgeons - - -	\$759	\$759	
Captain commanding company	699	892	\$193
Do on other duty -	699	772	73
Assistant and Post Surgeon -	626	626	
First Lieutenant -	506	652	146
Second Lieutenant -	446	592	146

From this it appears that the pay of an Assistant Surgeon was originally fixed at \$120 per ann. more than that of a First Lieutenant; it is now \$26 less,

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From Box 2

and but \$34 more than a brevet Second Lieutenant. As there are but 12 Surgeons to 55 Assistants, few can expect promotion, or receive more than at their first appointments, for life; there being, at present, eight who have already been in service from 19 to 27 years. Application has therefore been made to Congress, with the recommendation of the Executive, as well as of the officers of the army, for an increase of the pay of the Surgeons and Assistant Surgeons, as being not only altogether inadequate to their duties and services, but entirely below that of every other branch of service. Bills to that effect have frequently been reported, graduating their pay according to length of service. To those under five years service it is proposed to give the pay, &c. of a First Lieutenant, it being originally fixed at \$120 per annum; that after five years they shall receive the pay of a Captain, it having been originally fixed, on their first appointment, at but \$73 less; and that those who shall have served faithfully for ten years, shall be entitled to double rations, or the pay of a Captain in command of a post. The Surgeon on promotion to receive the pay of a Major, and after having served faithfully ten years, double rations, or the pay of a Major in command.

With regard to forage, it has always been allowed to all general, field, and staff officers. That to Assistant Surgeons has been the same as is received by Captains and Lieutenants, acting as Quartermasters, Commissaries, Aid-de-Camps, Adjutants, &c. &c., and is continued the same by the several bills which have been reported.

The chance for promotion is not only exceedingly small in the medical department, but even then the oldest surgeon receives but \$11 per month more than when he first entered the service, or than the youngest Assistant; whereas a great portion of the staff officers are taken from the Captains and Lieutenants of the line, as the quartermaster's and subsistence departments, Aids-de-Camp, Adjutants, &c., who receive additional pay, and in *this respect*, have all the advantages of promotion, however short may have been their period of service; while the medical officer can receive additional pay in no case, whatever may be his duties or length of service.

While other officers are supported and educated at the public expense, the Surgeon not only supports and educates himself, but is by the army regulations, subjected to a rigid examination, and cannot receive appointment, unless, in addition to a good medical education, he shall have been sufficiently long in private practice, to qualify him to take charge of a military post, where the lives and health of officers and soldiers must be committed to his care, for the most part in situations where he can receive neither professional assistance nor advice.

The bills heretofore reported have not been acted on, because it was proposed to equalize the pay of the officers generally, of the naval as well as military service. A bill purporting to "equalize the pay of the officers of the army and navy" has at last been reported, but so far from doing justice to the medical department of the army, this graduation bill actually *still further increases* the pay of every officer of the line from a Colonel to a Second Lieutenant, while it *diminishes* that of every officer of the medical department, except the 12 Surgeons; the increase to eight of these, however, being but \$74 per annum, while the whole 55 Assistant Surgeons are *reduced* to the pay of a Second Lieutenant—as appears from the following table:

	Present compensation, including pay, subsistence, forage, servants, and double rations.	Salaries by proposed bill, in House of Representatives.	Increase.
Colonel in command -	\$2,510	\$3,000	\$ 490
Do on other duty -	2,072	2,500	428
Lt. Col. in command -	2,088	2,500	412
Do on other duty -	1,723	2,200	477
Major in command -	1,822	2,000	178
Do on other duty -	1,530	1,600	70
Captain commanding company over 10 years -	1,067	1,400	333 15
Do on other duty -	947	1,200	253
Do under 10 years com'g -	1,067	1,200	133
Do on other duty -	947	1,100	153
First Lieutenant -	827	1,100	273
Second Lieutenant -	667	900	233
Surgeon General -	2,500	2,500	
Surgeon 15 years -	1,126	1,600	474
Do 10 do -	1,126	1,400	274
Do under 10 years -	1,126	1,200	74
Assistant Surgeon -	993	900	Decrease 93 !!

If the increase be intended as a substitute for the present amount of fuel and quarters, no possible reason appears why it should be withheld from the medical officers, many of whom are, from their stations, and the duties required of them, at the highest expense on this account. A Colonel, for example, in Washington, would receive the full pay, emoluments and allowances as at present, including fuel and quarters, while the Surgeon General would receive \$500 less; the Surgeon at New York and New Orleans proportionably less than those at West Point and Baton Rouge, and in fact, not much more than an Assistant Surgeon at the latter places; while an Assistant Surgeon of Dragoons, after deducting the expense of his horse and forage, would scarcely receive half as much as one at Fort Gibson, in his neighborhood.

Extract from the report of the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, at the first session of the twenty-second Congress, made on the 20th of December, 1831, accompanying a bill to regulate the pay, &c., of the army.

“By this bill the pay and emoluments of a Major are allowed to a Surgeon, and those of a Captain to an Assistant Surgeon, with eight dollars a month for the forage of one horse; and double their daily rations to each of them, after they have served ten years in their respective grades.

“The importance of the duties of the Surgeons, upon which the comfort, the health, and the efficiency of the army so essentially depend, are manifest and notorious; and yet the pay and subsistence of a Surgeon amount to only \$63 a month, or \$756 a year; less by \$132 a year than those of a Captain, which are \$888; and the pay and subsistence of an Assistant Surgeon amount to no more than \$52 a month, or \$624 a year, whilst a First Lieutenant receives \$648 a year; and, when he commands a company, which is very common, \$768 a year.

“However long the Surgeons continue in the service, their compensation remains the same. as they can rise no higher; neither can any lucrative employment be conferred upon them; unlike the military officers, who may be transferred to the staff, be ordered on extra duties, or obtain separate commands, with the allowance of double rations.

“From a statement of the Surgeon General, made during the last session of Congress, it appeared that there were then in the army eight Surgeons and forty five Assistant Surgeons; that, of the Surgeons, one of them had been in the service seventeen years, two sixteen, one twelve, and one ten years; and, that, of the Assistant Surgeons, five had been in the service fourteen years, eight twelve years, five ten, and the rest from nine years to a recent date. For the whole of these periods their emoluments have been stationary; whilst, in the ten years ending in 1830, fifteen Captains have been promoted to Majorities, nineteen to Colonelcies and Lieutenant Colonelcies, besides numerous promotions from the inferior grades. From causes doubtless accidental, but operating with peculiar hardship upon the medical staff, whilst the condition of every officer in the army below the rank of Major has been improved, theirs has been unchanged. Nor is this the only injurious comparison of which they have a right to complain. Formerly, the pay and emoluments of a Surgeon and of an Assistant Surgeon in the army, were the same as those of a Surgeon and of a Surgeon’s Mate in the navy. By an act of Congress passed 24th of May, 1828, the pay and subsistence of a Surgeon in the navy were raised to \$75 a month; after he had served five years, they were raised to \$87 a month; after ten years’ service, to \$90 a month, and, after twenty years’ service, to \$100 a month. By the same act, the pay and subsistence of a Surgeon’s Mate, after he has served five years, are \$57 a month; and, after ten years’ service, they are increased to \$69 a month. Thus, a Surgeon in the navy may now receive for his pay and subsistence \$100 a month, whilst a Surgeon in the army can receive no more than \$63; and a Surgeon’s Mate in the navy may receive for his pay and subsistence \$69 a month, whilst an Assistant Surgeon in the army is entitled to no more than \$52 a month. It ought also to be noticed, that the promotion of a Surgeon’s Mate is necessarily much more rapid than that of an Assistant Surgeon; there being in the navy thirty seven Surgeons and forty-six Surgeons’ Mates, and, in the army, but eight Surgeons, with forty-five Assistant Surgeons. It should likewise be recollected, that the military officers are educated by the Government, at West Point; by which they are exempt from the heavy expenses of a professional education, which are defrayed by the medical staff from their private resources. Influenced by the facts and reasons which they have adduced, the Committee on Military Affairs propose to put the Surgeons upon an equality with the Majors, and the Assistant Surgeons upon an equality with the Captains; with a provision, as Surgeons cannot be promoted at all, and Assistant Surgeons but very slowly, that they shall, as an equivalent for these disadvantages, be entitled to double rations, after they shall, respectively, have served ten years.”

Extract of an inspection report, made by Major General Gaines, for the year 1827.

"It is due to the Surgeons and Assistant Surgeons now in the service, without exception, to say, wherever my inspections have called me, their duties have been discharged with a degree of untiring zeal, persevering assiduity, ability and fidelity, unsurpassed by any officer of this or any other branch of the public service ever known to me. It has been my duty, in the course of my inspections during the last five years, to speak of most of these officers in terms of high approbation, because I could not, without injustice, speak of them otherwise. Aware that indiscriminate approbation is generally valueless; I should apprehend that my reports in favor of the Medical Department would be viewed in this light, were I not apprised of the fact that most of the principal officers of the army, and many of the most intelligent citizens, who occasionally visit our hospitals, concur with me in opinion.

"I think myself within the bounds of a reasonable estimate, when I state, that the increased vigilance and improvements gradually introduced into the Medical Department during the last twenty five years, principally since the war, and to a great extent since the year 1821, have produced a saving of life and health that may be fairly estimated at from 20 to 25 per cent., without any proportionable increase of expense—taking into view the number of troops and military posts within the United States at different periods of the time.

"The value of such a Medical Staff to an army, on the approach of war, and, consequently, in peace while preparing for war, can be conceived only by those who have carefully watched the progress of contagious diseases in camps, or at unhealthy places occupied by large bodies of men unattended by experienced Surgeons. Nothing tends so much altogether to prostrate the strength and spirits of an army, as the prevalence of such diseases without the talents necessary to check their progress; and, on the other hand, nothing tends so much to establish the physical and moral energy of any army, as a high state of health, added to that correct and habitual discipline which is attainable only by men in the enjoyment of health. These views and reflections have suggested to me the propriety of inquiring whether the officers of this indispensable branch of the staff, so distinguished for their usefulness and science, are adequately provided for and justly compensated? The result of this inquiry is, that there is scarcely any description of public officers, civil or military, who have been more inadequately paid than the officers of the Medical Staff. Their education is necessarily more expensive than that of most other officers; an expense, too, which is incurred by themselves or friends, and in no case sustained by the public, as in the case of most other officers of the army. Their prospects of promotion are limited in the extreme; their responsibilities are always great—often greater than those of many other branches of the General Staff; and their pay should be equal to any."

Extract from a report made on the 27th of August, 1833, by the Military Board, in Washington city, composed of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Quartermaster General, Commissary General of Subsistence, Chief of the Engineer Corps, Adjutant General, Paymaster General, Surgeon General, Colonel of the Ordnance Department, and the Chief of the Topographical Bureau.

"It is the opinion of the board that a more equitable scale cannot be devised for graduating the pay of the officers of the army according to rela-

tive rank, than their present pay and allowances, as established by law and regulations, with the *exception* of the *Surgeons* and *Assistant Surgeons*; whose pay, in the opinion of the board, and, as they believe, in the opinion of *every officer* of the *army*, is comparatively below that of all others, and that it is *inadequate* to compensate professional persons of suitable skill and ability; they therefore respectfully and earnestly recommend that it be increased and fixed according to length of service, agreeably to the accompanying bill, prepared and reported by the Military Committee of the Senate."

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That the Surgeons in the army of the United States shall be entitled to receive the pay and emoluments of a Major; and the Assistant Surgeons, who shall have served five years, shall be entitled to receive the pay and emoluments of a Captain; and those who shall have served less than five years, the pay and emoluments of a First Lieutenant; and that said Assistant Surgeons shall be entitled to receive the same allowance for forage as they are at present entitled to.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That every Surgeon and Assistant Surgeon, who shall have served faithfully ten years in these grades, respectively, shall be entitled to receive an increase of rations, per day, equal to the number of rations to which he may be entitled under this act.

Agreeably to this bill, of the 55 Assistant Surgeons, 31 would be at the lowest rate; 11 at the second, and 13 at the highest rate. Of the 12 Surgeons, 8 would be at the lowest, and 4 at the highest rate; making an *average* increase of but \$17 56 per month to each.

Extract from the report of the Secretary of War, accompanying the President's message in November, 1833.

"I feel it a duty once more to ask your favorable interposition in behalf of the Medical Corps. There is no portion of the army whose compensation is so utterly inadequate to their services. The pay of the highest grade but little exceeds that of a Captain, and the pay of the lowest that of a First Lieutenant; and these two grades constitute the whole range of service within the reach of medical officers. In the line of the army, and most of the staff departments, there are successive gradations of rank, each with increased emoluments, to stimulate the exertions and to reward the services of the officers. The importance of professional skill and talent in the medical corps will not be doubted; and the dispersed condition of our army in time of peace, and its exposure to the effects of various climates, render the conservation of its health an object of much solicitude. In time of war, this solicitude will be increased by the perils of active service.

"In order to place in a proper condition this branch of our military establishment, a system of examination has been recently instituted, by which the pretensions of medical gentlemen seeking appointments in the army, will be subjected to rigid scrutiny. A board, composed of able and experienced Surgeons, has been organized, and the various members of the departments have been examined by them. The result has already been highly useful, and cannot fail to be so for the future. But, while the standard of professional acquirements is thus increased, justice demands that the rate of compensation should be examined, and that it should be rendered commen-

surate with the duties and responsibilities of this most useful class of officers. It is not to be expected that the Medical Corps can retain the able men who now compose it, or see others join it unless their services are adequately rewarded."

These remarks, tabular views, and extracts from reports, all concur in representing the true and actual condition of the medical officers of the army; the leading feature of which is, that those who compose it have never been properly estimated, nor their services adequately rewarded.

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